

Stats and stones

Men, I am told, are scum. Most women, at one time or another, will cheerfully inform you of what opportunistic, selfish, lowlife bottom-feeding slugs their male counterparts are. To be fair, many men will often just as cheerfully inform you of what cold, manipulative, shrewish she-demons women are. Both attitudes are despicably narrow-minded and laughably stereotypical. The only difference is that man-bashing is fashionable. Men, it is argued, generally enjoy more physical, social, and economic powers than women do in our society, hence the justification for the belittlement of men as a group and a general suspicion of all things masculine. While one cannot deny that the security of women in our world is a valid and pressing concern, this anxiety too often creates a divisive gender mentality that keeps us from seeing each other as people and tends to produce "innocent until proven male" reasoning.

The latest lightning rod for ongoing male-female tension is the already infamous Carleton University survey on date abuse by researchers Katherine Kelly and Walter Dekeseredy. This nationwide survey of university students conducted last fall has become the subject of intense media scrutiny with the recent release of the survey's findings. The basic figures from the survey are, initially, quite shocking. Four out of five women surveyed (approximately eighty per cent) said that they had been victims of abuse by the men they dated. An almost equally high percentage of men admitted that they had been abusive to women they dated. The picture that emerges is one of intense fear and suspicion, and people have been wondering just what to make of all this. Unfortunately, the rather staggering statistics may be prompting people to jump up to a few rather over-generalized conclusions.

One thing to remember is the very broad definition of abuse in this study. As defined by the survey abuse can be physical, psychological, or sexual in nature. The rather huge eighty per cent abuse figure is broken down into smaller categories, and the serious physical and sexual assault that we often associate with abuse actually represents only a small number of the women who defined themselves as abused in the survey. Only twelve per cent of women said that they had been pressured into sexual intercourse and only two per cent said they had been physically forced into intercourse. Of course, any percentage of these crimes is too high to be acceptable, and verbal and psychological abuse should not be taken lightly either; however, the rather large and much-publicized overall figure of an eighty per cent abuse rate gives us a rather inflated impression of the problem which perhaps encourages a mild hysteria surrounding this subject.

The Carleton survey specifically is somewhat stilted and perhaps misleading in its findings in that it leans heavily toward a black-and-white impression of men as aggressors. For one thing the majority of those surveyed were women (1,835 out of 3142 surveyed). More significantly, there is an incongruity in that the survey provides numbers on the abuse of women but does not provide corresponding numbers as to how many men feel they have been abused by women in a relationship. These questions were asked on the survey, but researchers have yet to analyze the data. This leads one to wonder why the survey was publicized if the analysis was incomplete. It's hardly scientific and presents a rather one-sided view of the problem that verges on academic irresponsibility. Men tend to be more naturally aggressive than women, but they have no monopoly on abusive behavior. The abuse women suffer at the hands of their partners is deeply saddening, and it is important to raise awareness of this so as to caution women of the dangers they face and impress upon men the importance of responsible, decent behavior towards their partners; however, this does not justify the uniform depiction of men as abusers and women as victims. This creates a climate of fear and a gender schism that does nothing to raise awareness or bring about change. Any studies of male-female relations should treat both sexes with an objective eye unless their aim is simply to reinforce preconceived notions on the subject. While it is important to be aware of the dangers involved in relationships, we should not hasten to lay blame on either side. The only way men and women can and do live together is by talking with and not about each other, working together for a better understanding. Dividing into camps only breeds conflict, and most people would rather be lovers than fighters.

Sean McQuaid,
Editor-in-Chief



Editor:

Just a couple of points that I want to raise. First, unless I'm seeing things (which I don't think I am) there is a lot of abuse of the disabled parking spaces on campus. It really bugs me when I see secretaries and professors who are perfectly able to walk taking these spaces without a second thought. Students in some cases have to walk across campus on -20 degree mornings to get to their classes- why the hell should some secretary or professor get to park in these disabled spots? Where is security? That's why disabled parking stickers exist- if a car parked in the disabled spot does not have one of these stickers, it should be towed on the spot. If the owner gets upset, it's their problem. They can read the signs, can they not?

Secondly, I and a lot of other students are appalled at the mess that accumulates in our beloved "pit" after 4:00 on week nights. More than once I thought I was walking into a pig pen, not a lounge. They need someone in the pit in the evenings during the semester. Surely, the union, or whoever does the hiring can find a few dollars to hire a person to do this. As it stands now, one person in there one hour between 2 and 11 P.M. does not cut it!

Finally, I must say I'm in total agreement with Daniel LaRonde's article in last week's X-Press concerning the disappearing pop bottles. The person(s) who are taking these bottles surely realize how much they could bring in to the bursary fund. If I choose to leave my bottle in the pit, or wherever, I want to know my 20 cent deposit is going to a worthy cause (bursary fund), not to someone's personal bank account! Like Mr. LaRonde said in his article, if I put my bottle in the rack, I definitely would like that 20 cent refund in the bursary fund.

In closing, I hope everyone has a restful spring break next week-ENJOY!!!!

Junior Gallant

Dear Mr. Editor,

I am writing this letter to express the news content you have within the X-Press on any given week. To begin, I see (and this is only my opinion) many articles that do not really concern U.P.E.I. students personally, academically or financially. An example of this could be the weekly article of the Comic Column. If we must

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